

Lab to State Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Directions: Please browse through FAQs to see if you might find a solution to your question. If you check back regularly, more FAQ and discussion may be added. I have divided the FAQs up into topics to help your search.

Requirements

FAQ: Why is ODW changing the electronic reporting method?

Answer: SDWIS/Lab to State 2.0. This application is compliant with EPA electronic reporting standards in the Cross-Media Electronic Reporting Regulation (CROMERR). CROMERR provides the framework for electronic reporting under all of the EPA's environmental regulations, and ODW must comply with this standard. Information on CROMERR can be found at the EPA website:
<http://www.epa.gov/cromerr/about.html>

FAQ: When do we need to start submitting chemical (non-bacteriological) sample results electronically?

Answer: You are not required to submit chemical (non-bacteriological) results electronically, but the option will be made available to you starting January 30th, 2009. Please follow the procedures outlined in the CSV template instructions, and view the example titled "Chemical Example for Sample" and "Chemical Example for Results" listed under CSV template examples.

The CSV Template

FAQ: What is a .CSV file? What does it look like?

Answer: A Comma Separated Value (CSV) file is created in excel by selecting 'Comma Delimited (CSV) file (*.csv)' option when saving a file. The file, when viewed as a text file, is a continuous line separated by commas. You can view an example of the CSV template under the link "CSV template examples."

FAQ: When will Chemical Result Templates be available?

Answer: Chemical results can now be added on the sample and result templates as well as Bacteriological. Please see the Analyte Code Lists or Monitoring Schedule for appropriate sample type codes. Also, view the example titled "Chemical Example for Sample" and "Chemical Example for Results" listed under CSV template examples.

FAQ: When naming the CSV file, is it begin date and end date? Does this determine when the data is submitted?

Answer: The CSV file naming system is meant to help you (and us!) distinguish between your files in a dated format. It does not determine when or how frequently you submit the reports. There is not a required frequency with which you must submit reports.

Monitoring Schedules

FAQ: Will the monitoring schedule determine the reporting frequency of each parameter?

Answer: The Monitoring Schedule may change for each quarter, but it does not determine the frequency with which you report your results. As you receive samples and finish analysis, you are encouraged to send them in. There is not a determined frequency for sending in sample reports.

FAQ: Will our lab be sent the Monitoring Schedule for our laboratory's clients, or will the waterworks be responsible for sending the schedule to us?

Answer: The lab will receive the Monitoring Schedule from The Office of Drinking Water. Through the end of November, you can request a Monitoring Schedule by sending an email to Christine.Harrison@vdh.virginia.gov with a list of PWSIDs for the waterworks you serve. We will send you a filtered Monitoring Schedule specifically for your clients. After this point in time, we hope to have the Monitoring Schedule posted to our website. Each lab will then be responsible for filtering the Monitoring Schedule for a customized list of their waterworks.

Lab to State

FAQ: How can we get a log on to upload data? Is there a site to upload for testing?

Answer: We estimate that around November ODW will start assigning Labs Log-on pin numbers. They won't be necessary until January, since until then we will be logging on and testing your files for you (please send to Gigi Meyer at gigi.meyer@vdh.virginia.gov). Simply send the files once you have completed them, and ODW will keep track of the files and let you know what errors you may have in the submittal process. Please remember, though, that these files will NOT be submitted for sample compliance purposes until January. Please keep submitting via your other methods (excel spreadsheet, paper) until January, when the Lab to State portal becomes active on our website and you have a pin number to submit. Then these files may be counted for compliance purposes.

Common Errors Found When Processing your CSV Template

FAQ: What about the Lab Method Code?

Answer: The Lab Method Codes I used in the CSV template examples have not been verified to be correct, but labs should have specific lab method codes for each analysis. Send the spreadsheet to me and I will run it through to check and let you know if any errors come up.

FAQ: I'm not sure about the Sampling Point number? Can I just use the Facility ID there?

Answer: No, your sample will be rejected if you do this. Please request a Monitoring Schedule for your waterworks and this information will be listed there. It is essential that you have the correct Facility ID and Sampling Point number to submit successfully.

FAQ: What happens when I send you the same spreadsheet with more samples and results added to it?

Answer: Errors will be generated for the sample IDs that have been previously submitted. You are highly encouraged to generate new spreadsheet files by date and only submit new samples.

FAQ: What happens if I open up the CSV file I've created before submitting it?

Answer: I've found that opening up the CSV file will cause it to lose the formatting of columns (especially date and time) that I put into the excel spreadsheet you save it from. If you open it and the formatting on these columns is lost, and then submit, Lab to State may not recognize your date or time of sample. It is highly recommended that you keep a working excel copy to make modifications to, then save to a CSV from which you submit.